

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P. O. BOX 2120  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23218-2120

THE VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING TRAINING INITIATIVE  
*Questions and Answers*

**Introduction**

The 2000 session of the Virginia General Assembly provided \$33.9 million for continued funding of the Standards of Learning (SOL) teacher training initiative. The goal of this two-year effort is to ensure student success on the Standards of Learning tests for mathematics, science, English, and history and the social sciences.

The following question and answer section is intended to provide school divisions with background information on the SOL Training Initiative funds, guidelines and due dates for requesting funds, and program and evaluation requirements.

***Questions and Answers***

*Q1 How will the professional development needs identified by local school divisions be addressed?*

A. During the 2000-2002 biennium, the Virginia General Assembly will provide funds for the implementation and evaluation of comprehensive teacher training programs at the local level in the four core content areas of the Standards of Learning, and leadership training for principals, superintendents and other administrative staff in implementing the SOL.

*Q2 How much money is available to school divisions to implement teacher training Standards of Learning initiative?*

A. The funding for this initiative is based on full state funding of \$16,906,814 in the first year and \$17,063,967 in the second year for a total appropriation of \$33,970,781. Each school division is eligible to receive \$15 per pupil in the first year and \$15 per pupil in the second year in average daily membership, adjusted for half-day kindergarten programs. These funds are provided in addition to the state share of \$23.5 million, or \$306.00 per instructional position, provided for Standards of Quality (SOQ) staff development in the first year and \$23.7 million, or \$306.00 per instructional position, for teacher training in the second year of the biennium. *Funding for the Standards of Learning Training Initiative shall supplement, not supplant, training programs currently provided with SOQ staff development funds.*

*Q3 What are the required components of the Standards of Learning Training Initiative?*

- A. School divisions receiving funds to implement a training initiative must submit an application describing a plan for delivering and monitoring the effectiveness of quality training programs. Local plans must address the following three components:
1. Training for teachers to support and facilitate the implementation of the Standards of Learning and, thereby, achievement of the requirements of the Standards of Accreditation. Such training shall include training in instruction and remediation techniques in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science (social studies); training in interpreting test data for instructional purposes; and, training in technology applications to implement the Standards of Learning.
  2. Incorporation of technology training with an emphasis on concepts for using technology as an instructional tool to meet the technology standards established in the Standards of Learning.
  3. Training for division superintendents and principals which is designed to assist them in the implementation of the Standards of Learning and the Standards of Accreditation. Such training shall include training in interpretation of test data for instructional purposes, instructional strategies to implement the 1995 Standards of Learning, and technology applications to implement the Standards of Learning.

School divisions are encouraged to develop plans that utilize collaborations with institutions of higher education and other local school divisions.

*Q4 What will be required of school divisions receiving funds to implement a training initiative?*

The Department of Education will develop and disseminate to school divisions a plan and instruments for assessing the success of local SOL training programs in meeting the goals and objectives of the state initiative. School divisions shall collect and analyze formative evaluation data during the program and may use the data to modify their training plans. Such program modifications must be approved in advance by the Department of Education.

School divisions that receive training funds from this appropriation must agree to implement their proposed program and agree to participate in monitoring and evaluation activities to be coordinated by the Department of Education during both years of this appropriation.

- School divisions must keep records documenting (i) the training process and (ii) participation numbers for administrators and K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for both division-wide training and building-level training. Such documentation may include
  - schedules or master lists of staff development sessions;

- announcements or memos about training sessions;
- other records of teachers and administrators who attended sessions;
- agendas, outlines, or syllabi of training sessions; and
- handouts or other materials from the training sessions.

The documents related to each training session and the records of participation numbers will be subject to audit by the state's evaluators.

- All principals and a sample of teachers and division administrators will complete surveys prior to and/or after the training supported by the initiative.
- All principals are expected to be able to indicate (i) the degree of emphasis given to each area of training for teachers in their school and (ii) the level of competence of their teachers in each area targeted by the training.
- A small sample of divisions will participate in in-depth case studies each year of the biennium. It is anticipated that these case studies will occur throughout each year and will focus on the training process and the relationship between the efficacy of the training provided and student achievement.

*Q 5 What are the teacher competencies that must be addressed in this staff development initiative?*

A. The Standards of Learning Training Initiative is intended to improve teacher competencies in the following areas:

- delivering instruction that effectively covers the core content knowledge and skills for mathematics, science, English, and history and the social sciences (see attached Core Content Expectations);
- interpreting the goals, structure, content strands, and topics as identified in the SOL teacher resource guides for mathematics, science, English, and history and the social sciences;
- interpreting SOL test data for instructional purposes;
- using effective instructional techniques and strategies that promote achievement for all students;
- using effective remedial techniques in mathematics, science, English, and history and the social sciences;
- identifying connections within and across disciplines that support student achievement of the SOL; and
- using instructional technology as a learning tool to help all students meet the mathematics, science, English, and history and social science SOL (see attached Core Content Expectations).

*Q 6 What are the administrative competencies that must be addressed in this staff development initiative?*

A. The *Standards of Learning Training Initiative* is intended to give administrators competency in the following areas:

- interpretation of test data for instructional purposes;
- instructional strategies to implement the new Standards of Learning; and
- technology applications to implement the Standards of Learning.

*Q7 Do school divisions have to provide training in all four core SOL content areas and training for teachers at all levels—elementary, middle, and high school?*

A. No. However, if training is not provided in all four core SOL content areas and for teachers at all levels, the application must provide evidence that all teachers of these content areas are proficient in the core competencies and core content expectations. School divisions are encouraged to develop training plans that link to SOL training supported by the 1998-2000 SOL Training Initiative funds.

*Q 8 What is the timeline for receiving funds for the initiative?*

A. In order to receive funds in the first year, school divisions must submit a request for funding that outlines a two-year training initiative for teachers and administrators. Requests must be received by the Department of Education no later than August 1, 2000. School divisions will receive notification of approval of program funding from the Department of Education by September 15, 2000. Funds will be transferred electronically in accordance with Department of Education procedures.

Conditions of funding for the second year will be contingent upon (i) the Department of Education receiving from school divisions a year-one financial summary no later than July 15 and (ii) the school division's compliance in participating in all evaluation activities.

*Q9 Do school divisions have to implement a Standards of Learning Training Initiative in the first year of the biennium?*

A. No. School divisions that prefer to conduct all of their Standards of Learning Training Initiative in the second year only shall inform the Department of Education of their decision no later than August 1, 2000, and may request that the first-year allocation be carried forward and added to the amount for which the school division is eligible in the second year of the teacher training program.

*Q10 For school divisions that defer their first-year funds to the second year, how will funds be allocated in the second year?*

- A. In order to receive funds in the second year, school divisions that deferred funds must submit a request for funding to the Department of Education no later than April 1, 2001. Notification of funding will be sent to those school divisions no later than May 15, 2001.

*Q11 Can school divisions carry unexpended funds at the end of the first year over into the second year of the appropriation?*

- A. Yes. Any unexpended funds from the appropriations for the *Standards of Learning Training Initiative* as of June 30, 2001, shall not revert to the surplus of the general fund but shall be carried on the books of the Department of Accounts and added to the respective school division's approved second-year allocation. Any funds provided to school divisions in the first year (FY2000-2001) for the Standards of Learning Teacher Training Initiative that are unexpended as of June 30, 2001, shall be carried on the books of the locality to be appropriated to the school division in the following year for the SOL teacher training program.

*Q12 What criteria will be used to evaluate training program applications?*

- A. Applications for funding of local Standards of Learning training programs will be appraised by a peer-review team consisting of educators from local school divisions and colleges and universities. Review criteria consistent with the following evaluation questions will be used to judge the merits of each application:
- Does the application address or exceed the required program components and identified teacher competencies for the Standards of Learning Training Initiative?
  - Does the application present a plan of action that (i) is consistent with its stated purpose and with the three program components mandated by the General Assembly of Virginia and (ii) reflects research-based professional development practices?
  - Does the budget reflect and support the objectives, strategies, and evaluation procedures?
  - Does the budget indicate a cost-effective model for staff development?

*Q13 What type of reports will be required?*

- A. Participating school divisions shall submit to the Department of Education by July 15 of each funding cycle a financial summary report. Guidelines for submitting reports will be provided by the Department of Education.

*Q14 How will the Department of Education assist school divisions?*

- A. Technical assistance will be provided to school divisions in the preparation of their training plans. The Department will also work with division superintendents and other key instructional leaders to provide assistance, upon request, to school divisions in the implementation of approved plans. Priority for such assistance will be given to school divisions that do not have curriculum specialists on staff and to those divisions with the lowest passing rate on the Standards of Learning tests. Other technical assistance services will be identified and delivered through the Governors's Best Practice Centers.

*Q15 When should applications be submitted to the Department of Education?*

- A. Applications should be received at the Department of Education by 5:00 p.m., August 1, 2000. They should be mailed to :

Dr. Patricia I. Wright  
Director, Office of Secondary Instruction  
Virginia Department of Education  
P. O. Box 2120  
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120.

If mailed by overnight carrier or hand-delivered, the application should be sent to Dr. Wright at:

Virginia Department of Education  
101 North 14th Street  
James Monroe Building, 23rd Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

*Q16 What should be submitted to the Department of Education?*

- A. Guidelines and application forms for submitting funding requests are included in this packet. One original and five (5) copies of the application should be submitted to the Department of Education with pages numbered, beginning with the Cover Page. Applications should be stapled in the upper left corner, but otherwise unbound. The application should be typed.

For additional information about the Virginia Standards of Learning Training Initiative or about the guidelines for submitting local SOL staff training programs, please contact Dr. Patricia I. Wright (mailto:pwright@pen.k12.va.us) at (804) 225-2880.